


AVALON IS RISEN



A new culture needs a new music. From that unique intermingling of science fiction fandom and pagan revival that emerged from the ferment of the sixties come these classic examples of “Bardic Magick,” performed by the inimitable Leslie Fish, and ably supported by Kristoph Clover, Margaret Davis and a stellar crew of fellow musicians.

Leslie has been part of the movement since Isaac Bonewits was doing ceremonies in Don Simpson’s living room in Berkeley. Inspired in style and sensibility by Woody Guthrie, she gives us the music of a new folk community. Whether one takes the old gods as faith or fiction, these songs hold insights we need. Here you’ll find myth and magic, a sense of wonder and a sense of humor, and threading through the lyrics the sometimes ominous awareness that not all legends stay safely in the past.

The title piece – “Avalon is Risen” – was written by Isaac Bonewits, founder of the Ár nDraíocht Féin. There are also songs by authors such as Rudyard Kipling and Poul Anderson. But all, whether Leslie is responsible for the music alone or the lyrics as well, reflect her passionate perspective, and are performed with verve and skill. “Hallows Dirge” and “Rise Up, Bright Sun” are pagan hymns, and “Mount Tam” is a spell. “The Earth’s Fire-Breathing Daughter” and “Jack the Slob and the Goddess of Love” are comic tales of a pagan culture, and the “invocation” to Cthulhu is an alliterative tour de force of parody. “Hymn to the Night-Mare” evokes the spirit of Celtic legend. In “Ship of Stone” we see how the mythic instincts of our past might shape the legends of the future. “Chickasaw Mountain” presents a new myth about the cost of the bardic bargain.

I’d say Leslie Fish made a pretty good deal.

Diana L. Paxson
Author of *Sword of Avalon*



AVALON IS RISEN

Isaac Bonewits wrote *Real Magic*, the seminal book on modern magical and psychic practice, and was a founder of the modern American Druid movement. He also wrote some of the first Pagan songs of the last half-century. This is one of his best, his hymn to the Neopagan movement. I remember singing it for a May Day/Beltane ritual he led in the Berkeley Rose Garden; between the music and dancing and theater, it was one of the most beautiful and effective ceremonies I've ever seen.

Hail the day so long expected, when the Gates are opened wide.
Magicks, old and new collected, have restored the ancient pride.
Throughout Faerie's wide dominion hear the trumpets swoop and soar.

Avalon is risen, is risen, is risen.
Avalon is risen, to fall no more.

All of us now stand in wonder as our visions come to pass.
Old Earth Mother and God of Thunder, Huntress, Weaver, join the dance.
Swell the sound of joyous laughter, hear immortal voices roar!

Though some thought that all their hating had sent Her beneath the waves,
Avalon was only waiting, for Her folk will not be slaves!
Now the day of freedom's dawning brings them back forevermore.

Hark, all ye in beds and bowers; Pan has come another time –
Ruling with a rod of flowers, giving us the bliss sublime.
Freyr and Freya now shall guide us, Venus be our counselor.

Listen warriors of the Old Gods, as the Wild Hunt's horn does sound.
All their works shall fall before us, and the evil ones be bound.
Raise the shield of bright Athena, swing the hammer of great Thor.



Hear me now, each dree and bandree, Brahman, volkhvi, flamen too,
Priest and priestess, poet, godhi, runemaster and shaman true:
All your faith is now rewarded, prophets of the ancient lore.

Some of us shall yet go a-sailing, through the void so deep and far.
They will come with us unfailing, plant the seeds from star to star.
Hear our children's children's voices, join with those from days of yore.

*Margaret Davis: backing vocals; Shira Kammen: vielle; Kristoph Klover: backing vocals,
djembe, electric bass & percussion; Nada Lewis: accordion; Kevin White: backing vocals;
Rob Wilson: bodhran*

Lyrics © 1985 Isaac Bonewits; music traditional ("Babylon is Fallen")



Hallow's Dirge

Christa Landon, one of the founders of the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans, wrote this as a Samhain hymn. She's written other Pagan songs, but this is my favorite. It has been used in circle, with good effect. No, it wasn't sung at my wedding.



Hear my voice, O Lord of Hades.
Salve my sorrow; light is fading.
Muse, add thine eloquence to mine.

End of year and end of harvest.
Burnt the fields where life abounded.
All that remains is memory's wine.

Where the roses of the summer?
Where the light, when leaves have fallen?
Where are the works that I have done?

As the sowing, so the reaping
Turns the year to joy or weeping.
The hour of weighing grain has come.

Wine distills the sun of summer.
Now I wait and watch and slumber,
Vigil to keep beneath the ground.

Yet my eyes see light and darkness.
Yet my soul knows truth and shadow.
Yet I attend upon the spring.

Deep in silence speaks the wisdom.
Let me treasure autumn's season:
Time to reflect, to dream and plan.

Burn the weeds and fill the grain bin.
Rise the shades to whisper longings.
Earth rends her garments, mourns the sun.

*Margaret Davis: backing vocals; Shira Kammen: fiddle;
Kristoph Klover: backing vocals, field drum & oboe;
Beth Milne: French horn; Mark Ungar: upright bass;
Kevin White: backing vocals*

© 1972 Christa Heiden Landon

THE BALLAD OF THE THREE KINGS

A sci-fi classic, this also works as a Pagan moral fable. This is also one of the earliest known filksongs. I came across it in the first *Westerfilk Collection*.

Three kings rode out on the road to hell, and ravens rode on the gale.
The night wind rang like an iron bell, and hissed with sleet and hail.
Three kings rode out where the night wind runs, out onto death's highway:
The king of the Britons, the king of the Huns, the king of Norrway.

The king of the Britons was crowned with gold, and rode a stallion white.
Saying: "All men go when they are told, but I go not in fright.
A godly king who loved his folk and guarded them with his rod,
And fire and gallows against themselves, will surely go to God."

The king of the Huns was crowned with steel, and rode a stallion red.
Saying: "Proud must my father's spirit feel of me who crowned my head
Halfway across a world in pain, which mightily I did win.
So now I go home to my father's fane, and not to the evil Djinn."

The king of Norway was crowned with wings, and rode a stallion gray.
Saying: "High and lustily my heart sings, for Odin guests me today.
I died in bed, aye, but I hung full many a screaming thrall
On Odin's tree, with runes on tongue, so now I go to his hall."

Three kings rode out on the road to hell, and the bloody-breasted hound
Bayed where the darkening waters fell icy beneath the ground.
Three kings a final judgment won from the High Gods' lips that day:
The Devil took the Briton, the Djinn took the Hun, and Hela took Norrway.

Kristoph Klover: drums, octave mandolin & recorders; **Beth Milne:** French horn; **Mark Ungar:** upright bass

Lyrics by Poul Anderson (used by permission of the Trigonier Trust); music © Gordon Dickson



LUCIFER

Don Simpson has written only a few poems and songs, but they're all gems. He based this song on a Robert Browning poem, about a painter who made his reputation by "playing it safe" and now regrets his lack of courage. This poem goes beyond simply playing it safe with art.

Let me teach you to wonder and worry.
Permit me to tell you how to wage war.
A creature's reach should exceed its grasp,
Or what's a Heaven for?

I'll show you the way to take thought for tomorrow,
To struggle for dreams, and to hunger for more.
A creature's sight should outrun its might,
Or what are the heavens for?

Taste of the fruit of the tree that is knowledge,
Of good and of evil, and all the world's lore.
A creature's thought must exceed what it's taught,
Or who is Heaven for?

So come here and learn to become as the gods are,
For I've got a wonderful secret to tell:
A creature's reach should exceed its grasp.
What else is Heaven or Hell?

Margaret Davis: backing vocals & recorders; **Kristoph Klover:** electric bass, electric guitar & field drum; **Kevin White:** backing vocals

© 1984 Don Simpson





Rise Up, Bright Sun

A hymn for the Winter Solstice, this is also an effective magical-working song for stopping rain, meant to balance my Rain Ritual songs. Hehehch. I've learned, the hard way, the truth of H. P. Lovecraft's famous saying: "Do not call up any that you cannot put down."

Rise up, bright sun; bring back the days again.
Rise up, bright sun; show us your face again.
Come calling the leaves back into the trees.
Come breaking the ice-floes out of the seas.
Rise up, bright sun.

Rise up, bright sun; give us your light again.
Rise up, bright sun; chase back the night again.
Come driving the iron-gray out of the sky.
Come gather the winds and hammer them dry.
Rise up, bright sun.

Rise up, bright sun; give us our lives again.
Rise up, bright sun, 'til spring arrives again.
Come burning the snow to rivers of rain.
Come turning the ice to oceans of grain.
Rise up, bright sun.

Rise up, bright sun; your children call to you.
Rise up, bright sun; our futures fall to you.
Forgive us the days forgotten to fear;
We know it too well this time of the year.
Rise up, bright sun.

*Margaret Davis: backing vocals; Shira Kammen: fiddle;
Kristoph Klover: backing vocals, octave mandolin & percussion;
Nada Lewis: accordion; Mark Ungar: upright bass;
Kevin White: backing vocals; Rob Wilson: bodhran*

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THE EARTH'S FIRE-BREATHING DAUGHTER


Strictly for fun, this is about the difference between Pagan and New Age, or Pagan class conflict. Any resemblance to actual squabbles in the San Francisco Bay Area is purely coincidental. Honest.

The Earth's fire-breathing daughter came up from Oakland town
With her high priest and her coven, who had good jobs all around.
Now where to find a stretch of land and a good big house therein,
Enough to hold them every one? ...Where else but Marin?

The day that they were moving in, a welcome wagon came.
'Twas a guru in a nightshirt and a wealthy local dame.
They murmured: "Groovy. What's your sign?" "Not now," the priestess said.
"Will you help me carry this freezer in?" ...The couple turned and fled.

Next week the priest went shopping, and came back with a steer –
Alive and well and mooing. The neighbors said: "My dear,
Is this organic lawn control?" "Hell, no," the priest did say.
"It's our summer solstice sacrifice." ...The neighbors ran away.

Well, the summer solstice ox roast was a blast you couldn't beat.
The coven ate and drank and danced 'til they passed out on their feet.
The uninvited neighbors grumbled: "Where do they think they are?
The nudity and drugs are fine, but that dancing goes too far."



So the neighbors got together, and they said: “These freaks must go.
They must be smoking Mary Jane. We’ll tell the sheriff so.
We’ll hide our coke and call the law, but first we’ll warn them fair.
We’ll burn a hot tub on their lawn, to chase them out of there.”

So the Earth’s fire-breathing daughter sent a message to the town:
“If you don’t leave me and mine alone, I’ll shake your playhouse down.”
The neighbors sneered: “Ooh, how uptight! How superstitious, too.”
And then they hollered for the law... as liberals always do.

The sheriff of Laid-back County, and all his laid-back men,
Went rolling up the coven’s hill – but they never rolled back again,
For the hill did shake and the Earth did quake and a mudslide thundered down.
One police car model stereo deck was all that anyone found.

There is a house in north Marin that the locals all ignore,
For since the earthquake hit, it has no neighbors anymore.
But late at night when the moon is bright, there’s a fire on the hill
And the sound of pipes and laughter where the coven dances still.

Shira Kammen: fiddle; **Kristoph Klover:** tambourine; **Nada Lewis:** accordion; **Mark Ungar:** upright bass;
Rob Wilson: bodhran

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THE CHALLENGER

I dreamed this up, literally, during a long dreary fever while reading a lot of books by Joseph Campbell. Any resemblance to various myths is purely intentional.

When I was a child I dreamed – but they weren't dreams at all –
Of far-off lands, of far-off times, watching kingdoms rise and fall.
Other bodies and names I had, but always the same work to do:
Always artisan, warrior, witch. I never thought the dreams were true.

Slowly through the years I learned: hands that ached to hold a pen,
A rebel soul no orders held, and vision into minds of men.
At last I read in an ancient book, and saw what I had always known.
Then I knew that the dreams were true; the tale it told was once my own.

Why do I come circling back? Slowly did the memories clear
Of ancient wars, of friends and foes, but never of my purpose here.
Still I sharpened my three-fold skills for use in some unknown game,
Only knowing that, age upon age, my enemy was still the same.

Patterns that repeat, I see. Faster through the world they skew.
The stars come right, the Fates take flight, and all the myths and dreams come true!
Whatever battle the gods prepare, for artistry, for weapons or for mind,
There I haste, for the answer waits: the purpose I was born to find.

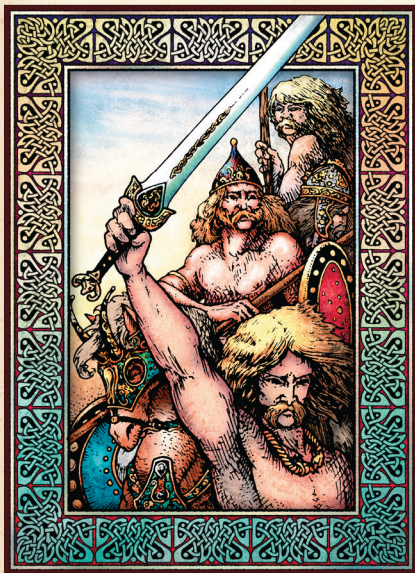
Then I saw the armies march, saw him raise his power high.
He preached: "Obey!" He practiced: "Rule!" and fattened on the ancient lie.
His wheedling words, his mystic might, his ultimately iron hand,
His promised hell – I know them well. Finally, I understand.

Master of the secret dark, are you so surprised to see
The ancient foe you should well know, come to spoil your victory?
Is your memory worse than mine? Or wouldn't you believe that it was true?
But I have hunted the ages down, fated to come after you!

Kristoph Klover: *backing vocals, drums & percussion*; **Nada Lewis:** *accordion*; **Beth Milne:** *French horn*;
Mark Ungar: *upright bass*; **Kevin White:** *backing vocals*

BERSERKER

There are legends aplenty about berserkers, usually Norse warriors, though there's also a tale of the battle madness of the Irish hero Cúchulainn. Some tales attribute the Berserker Syndrome to divine or demonic possession; others ascribe it to non-human inheritance, such as divine or faery blood. A few modern Pagans claim it's a psychic state that can be achieved by training. In any case, once raised it must be controlled. This is a song about how to maintain that control.



Kristoph Klover: backing vocals, drums & electric guitar;
Mark Ungar: upright bass; **Kevin White:** backing vocals

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Oh, do not seek to know what lies
Behind these mild and patient eyes,
For I have seen the demon's powers –
And even let the monster run –
In certain unforgotten hours.

The fire that sleeps within the blood
Can waken to a burning flood
That sweeps away whatever moved
Before the wordless killer's eye.
Oh, do not cry to see it proved!

No, leave the devil where it lies.
Cast no blood into my eyes,
And never place my life in threat,
For when the monster comes alive,
If you survive, you won't forget.

The roar when language falls away,
The vision bleached to black and gray,
The speed that makes the wind feel slow,
The strength beyond the bones' designs:
These are the signs I too well know.

I wear my weapons openly,
Tolerant, kind, though I must be.
I keep the Fenris wolf in reins,
But this much warning I must give:
That while I live, the beast remains.



Chickasaw Mountain

I met Phil Ochs only once, shortly before he died, but I was impressed by his music – and later by the classic example of his career. There are old legends about musicians or poets who traded their souls – or lives – for a limited time, usually seven years, of glory; there are all too many musicians who have lived out that legend for real. Ochs, at least, dedicated his blaze of glory to ending a bad war.

High up on the mountain of Chickasaw, they say,
There's one patch of darkness that never yields to day.
Deep are those shadows, old as the mountain.
Something is waiting in there.
Call on her if you dare.
Seek no level of god or devil; she's something older by far.
Call her Lady of the Morning Star.

She offers two bargains. The price is steep and dark.
The one takes your life and the other leaves a mark.
If there's a third one, I never heard one.
Choose for yourself; what's the fee?
Nothing she gives comes free.
Name your goal. She won't ask your soul. She might even give you her own –
And maybe you'd be better off alone.

My old fellow rebel: I know what deal he made.
The power rang through every song he wrote and played,
Made him the best of his generation,
Sang to the end of the war –
And not a moment more.

Then it left him. The Power bereft him, left only one fate to see –
Hanging on his sister's apple tree.

Forgive my old buddy who soon forgot my name.
I chose not to follow his seven years of fame.
He took the high road, I take the low road:
Sing second place, but sing long –
And have always one more song.
Take your stars and give me my scars;
I'd rather live long and be free –
So take his cup the hell away from me!

Whoever has wisdom can guess what lies unsaid:
The cost of the Gift to the living and the dead.
Still, if you feel you'll gain from the deal
You'll play with the Old Morning Star,
No need to travel far.
Don't just count on Chickasaw Mountain;
If there's a deal meant for you,
Any wild place on Earth will do.



Shira Kammen: fiddle; Nada Lewis: accordion; Mark Ungar: upright bass;
Rob Wilson: bodhran

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WANDERER

This is my take on an ancient Norse legend: that Odin would often walk the Earth in disguise to observe humans and reward their actions, for good or ill. It can also be used as a straightforward hymn to Old One-Eye.

Who is this who walks the roads? An old man, tall and gray.
One of his eyes is gone. The other looks far away.
He's leaning on a walking stick. It's very long; it's very thick.
His steps are slow, his eye is quick
On this cold, foggy day.

Always be kind to travelers, wandering near or far.

Always be kind to travelers; you don't know who they are.

The old man knocking at the door asks if you'll be kind.
Two crows in the sky circle close behind.
Give him a cup of what you've got: beer that's cold, or coffee hot,
A bowl of stew if you've a pot, whatever you can find.

Pattern's always weaving, more than you can see,
But courage, wit and kindness, strength and honesty,
Can weave the pattern 'round you better than you know.
Take the old man's blessing that he'll give before he'll go.

Who is that gone down the road? You never got his name.
He never said where he's bound, or said from where he came.
What comes after, who can tell? Earthly heaven, earthly hell –
But did you treat him ill or well, then you will reap the same.

Shira Kammen: fiddle; **Kristoph Klover:** backing vocals, electric bass & tenor guitar;
Rob Wilson: bodhran

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JACK THE SLOB AND THE GODDESS OF LOVE

I wrote this as a jolly warning to lazy louts; be careful what you pray for, especially to the Goddess of Love – she just might grant your wish. No, it wasn't inspired by any one person, though plenty of women have sworn they know guys like this.



Jack the Slob to Venus prayed:
“Grant this night I shall get laid,
Tonight I shall get laid.”

The Goddess said: “That shall I do,
But first I ask three things of you.”

“First, go clean your teeth and bod and hair,
And change your week-old underwear.”

“Next, pray put on clothes that flatter you:
A clean T-shirt and jeans will do.”

“Third, when a maid you would impress,
Pray do not drool down her chest.”

Jack replied: “No, thank you, Ma’am.
Send me a girl who’ll take me as I am.”

Venus said: “I’ll tell you what,
Though I should kick your lazy butt.”

“Perhaps ’twould be more fitting far
To send you a maid who’ll take you as you are.”

“Pray go at once to the city zoo,
There you’ll find the maid for you.”

There he went with hopes held high
Until the ape house he came nigh.

There a maiden him did view,
And she was struck with passion true.

Her hair was thick, her looks were free...
Indeed, she was a lovely chimpanzee.

She leapt the fence ere he could run,
And seized him boldly by the bun.

She dragged him swiftly to her lair.
For all that I know, he may still be there.

So, lazy swains, you’d best believe:
You should not get the Goddess peeved.
You should not get Her peeved!

Margaret Davis: harpsichord & recorders; **Shira Kammen:** fiddle; **Kristoph Klover:** backing vocals & kazoo

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THE SUN IS ALSO A WARRIOR

Besides being a mythical ballad and a hymn to Apollo, Mars or Mithra, this is another commentary on the hard realities of life. War is generally a thing to be avoided, but there are worse things – which is why wars are still fought.

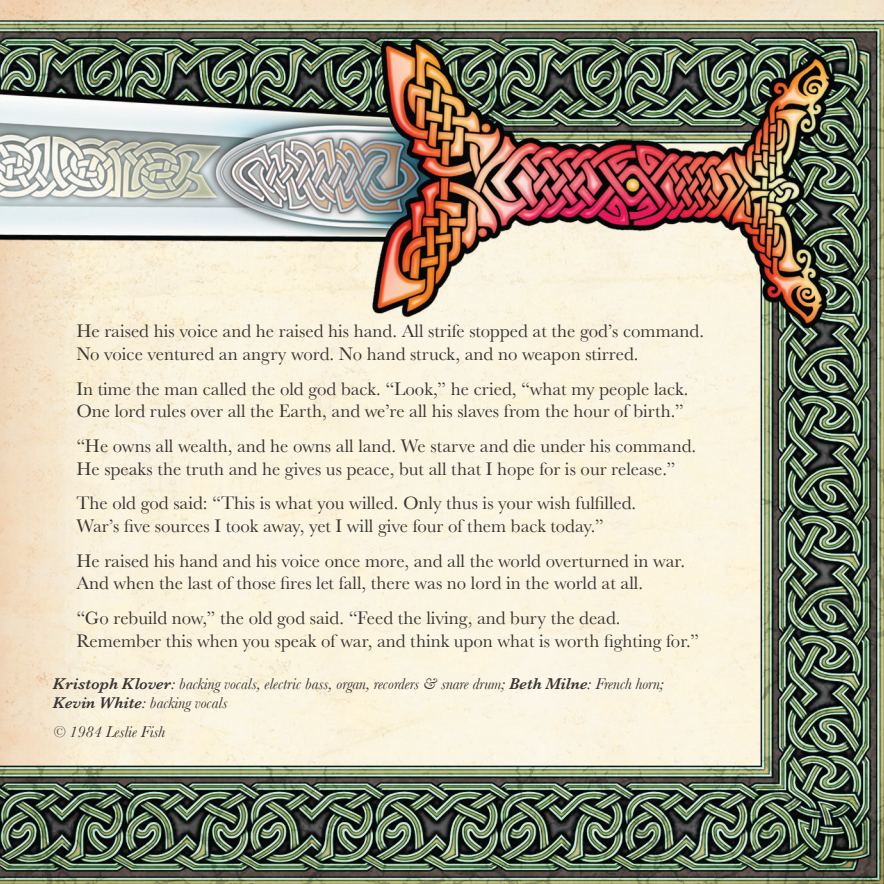
Two men walked on a beach in the sun. One left footprints: the other left none.
One was a man that no man obeys, the other a god from the ancient days.

“Look,” said the man, “how my kind make war. I summoned you here to ask what for.”
“For wealth or land,” the god replies, “for life or freedom, or some king’s lies.”

*The sun is also a warrior. Knowledge can also destroy,
Nor can the kindest will preserve you from the kill.
Not all of wisdom brings joy.*

“Four of those five,” the first one said, “are not enough to appease the dead.
To save my world, all this strife must cease. So now I bid you to conjure peace.”

The god said, “Yes, though it grieves me sore, for I was also a god of war,
And I remember what you forget. Four of those five you may still regret.”



He raised his voice and he raised his hand. All strife stopped at the god's command.
No voice ventured an angry word. No hand struck, and no weapon stirred.

In time the man called the old god back. "Look," he cried, "what my people lack.
One lord rules over all the Earth, and we're all his slaves from the hour of birth."

"He owns all wealth, and he owns all land. We starve and die under his command.
He speaks the truth and he gives us peace, but all that I hope for is our release."

The old god said: "This is what you willed. Only thus is your wish fulfilled.
War's five sources I took away, yet I will give four of them back today."

He raised his hand and his voice once more, and all the world overturned in war.
And when the last of those fires let fall, there was no lord in the world at all.

"Go rebuild now," the old god said. "Feed the living, and bury the dead.
Remember this when you speak of war, and think upon what is worth fighting for."

Kristoph Klover: backing vocals, electric bass, organ, recorders & snare drum; **Beth Milne:** French horn;
Kevin White: backing vocals

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Oak, Ash & Thorn

This is based on Kipling's poem, "A Tree Song"; it's his light-hearted account of some of the ancient sacred trees of England. He had studied British folklore, and knew a lot more than he told. He also knew a few of the great 19th-century British "occultists" – which included some not-so-covert Pagans.



Of all the trees that grow so fair,
Old England to adorn,
Greater are none beneath the sun
Than oak, and ash, and thorn.
Sing oak, and ash, and thorn, good sirs,
All of a midsummer's morn!
Surely we sing of no little thing,
In oak, and ash, and thorn!

Oak of the clay lived many a day
Ere ever Aeneas began.
Ash of the loam was a lady at home
When Brut was an outlaw man.
Thorn of the down saw New Troy town
(From which was London born);
Witness hereby the ancients
Of oak, and ash, and thorn!

Yew that is old in the churchyard-mould,
He breedeth a mighty bow.
Alder for shoes do wise men choose,
And beech for cups also.
But when you've killed, and your bowl is spilled,
And your shoes are clean outworn,
Back ye must speed for all that ye need
To oak, and ash, and thorn!

Elm she hates mankind, and waits
Till every gust be laid
To drop a limb on the head of him
That anyway trusts her shade.
But whether a lad be sober or sad,
Or mellow with ale from the horn,
He'll take no wrong when he lies along
'Neath oak, and ash, and thorn!

Oh, do not tell the priest our plight,
Or he would call it a sin;
But – we've been out in the woods all night,
Conjuring summer in!
And we bring good news by word of mouth –
Good news for cattle and corn –
Now is the sun come up from the south
With oak, and ash, and thorn!

Sing oak, and ash, and thorn, good sirs,
All of a midsummer's morn!
England shall bide till judgment tide
With oak, and ash, and thorn!

Jane Davis: backing vocals; Margaret Davis: backing vocals & recorder; Shira Kammen: fiddle; Kristoph Klover: backing vocals & tenor guitar; Nada Lewis: accordion; Mark Ungar: upright bass; Kevin White: backing vocals; Rob Wilson: bodhran

Lyrics by Rudyard Kipling (1906, Puck of Pook's Hill), adapted by Leslie Fish; music © 1978 Leslie Fish



HYMN TO THE NIGHT-MARE

Written after an earthquake, this is about the darker side of Nature – animal, vegetable and even mineral. The goddess, under various names, is the natural-selection side of evolution: She Who Is To Be Outrun or otherwise avoided.

If I see her again, I must die or kill –
In the bleak, dark wood, on the stone-ringed hill,
When the year wears down and the trees are bare,
In the form of an upright white-fanged mare –
For where she appears Death is on the air,
And someone in sight must die.

Have you seen her again in the dark and cold?
The night-black mare and her grim nine-fold,
With her thigh-bone staff and her white-skull globe,
In her cyclone crown and her storm-cloud robe,
With her red-black eyes that no light can probe –
When more than a few must die.

We will see her again when the Earth shall cry,
When the hills fall down and the seas run high.
She will strike her hoof on the earthquake fault,
With her twelve limbs bared to the heaven's vault.
She will dance in flame 'til the stars cry halt,
And all but a few shall die.

Kristoph Klover: field drum & oboe; **Beth Milne:** French horn; **Mark Ungar:** upright bass

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A decorative border of Celtic knotwork in red, green, and blue runs along the top, bottom, and left edges of the page. On the right side, there is a large, circular, stylized design in brown, green, and white, resembling a sun or a moon with swirling patterns.

MOUNT TAM (ANICDA URBIS)

A song about the grim realities of life on Earth; sometimes survival requires another creature's death, and sometimes the survival of one community means the ruin of another. The chorus has been used effectively as a banishing charm.

Here I sit on the head of Mount Tam.
Might as well be in Vietnam.
The battle is coming soon.
The stars are hid, but the sky is gray
With the lights of the cities that ring the Bay
In the shape of a crescent moon. So...

*If there be anything here
That cometh not in the name of the Powers of Light,
Then in the name of the Powers of Light,
Let it be gone!*

Cities live. The stones have soul
As long as one dweller stands up whole,
And here are three million lives.
Their spirit runs through the nerves of wire,
Through the concrete bones and the furnace fire.
The body of stone survives. So...



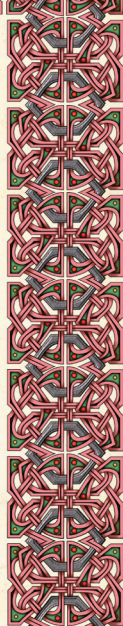
Warnings groan that the deep plate-crack
Will shake one burden from Earth's green back.
Tonight one of us goes down.
So here we fight with our wizards' force
To shift the fault on its other course –
And swallow the Southern Crown! So...

We who feel the currents of power
Have no rest in the darkening hour
Of a war that we did not choose.
But if some city must fall to the brine,
I swear that city shall not be mine.
I do not intend to lose! So...

So aim the bolt, and raise the shield.
The choice is cruel, but we dare not yield
When life is the prize of war.
San Andreas, we curse your name
As we strike your fault with our silent flame
And deflect, and deflect once more! Sing!

*Jane Davis: backing vocals; Margaret Davis: backing vocals;
Shira Kammen: fiddle; Kristoph Klover: backing vocals, djembe, octave
mandolin & percussion; Nada Lewis: accordion; Mark Ungar: upright bass;
Kevin White: backing vocals; Rob Wilson: bodhran*

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The Gods Aren't Crazy

I wrote this after reading a couple of Charles Fort's books back-to-back. Fort loved to dig up accounts of odd, bizarre and inexplicable incidents, purely for the fun of watching the Official Authorities fumble and scramble for explanations. Hey, my theory makes as much sense as any others!

Look out your window and what do you spy?
Rain falling out of a sunshiny sky.
It's changing to hailstones that weigh half a ton,
With seven live frogs hopping out of each one.
It's not the Last Judgment; stop wailing of Sin.
It's only the gods at wine tasting again.

*So drink, drink, to Charlie Fort's memory –
Marvelous doings, and marvelous sights.
Drink, drink, we may as well join them.
The gods are not crazy; they're higher than kites.*

When strange objects tumble from out of the clouds,
Stay under cover, for Thor's gotten plowed.
Those odd man-like critters are not saucer-men,
But shape-shifting Mercury's plastered again.
It's not Armageddon; it's only a sign
That this season's ambrosia really is fine.

Weird cloven hoofprints dance all up and down
To glow on the streets and the walls of your town,
Made by some critter that ran on two legs –
Plus the sheep are all pregnant and the rooster's laid eggs.
Don't blame the devil or run to the hills;
It's only old Pan, and he's crocked to the gills.

Eerie lights blossom all over the sky –
Put on your sunscreen; Apollo is high!
The boulders have moved and the animals talk;
A tiddly Great Goddess is out for a walk.
Don't wail of UFOs; there's nothing to fear –
But be thankful the drink's not this good every year!

Margaret Davis: backing vocals; **Shira Kammen:** fiddle; **Kristoph Klover:** backing vocals, dounbek, percussion, sound effects & whistle; **Nada Lewis:** accordion; **Mark Ungar:** upright bass;
Kevin White: backing vocals. Sheep and roosters recorded live by **Kristoph Klover** at Ardenwood Farm.

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THE ARIZONA SWORD


I couldn't tell you the provenance of this local legend that I wrote up and put to music. It seems to date from Conquistador days, which would put it somewhere before 1690, but it also contains sentiments that seem distinctly post-Revolutionary. Then again, the Pueblo Indian tribes who threw out Spanish rule in the Great Pueblo Revolt of 1680 had a lot of similar ideas, so the legend really could be that old. You can get a truly amazing view of history by asking the Indians about their side of the story.

"Blacksmith, make a sword for me, such as none did ever see,
For ancient symbols of majesty have power in troubled times.
Blacksmith, make me a magic sword, one that will make me the valley's lord
Whom folk will hail with one accord to save them from their crimes."

Seeing he would not be deterred, the blacksmith took him at his word
And pondered long on what he'd heard about this would-be lord.
He pumped the fire and he made his start, melted iron in the fire's heart,
But he named the steel with an older art the Arizona Sword.

He chanted words to the blazing mix, of ancient Red Men's and White Men's tricks
To draw a spirit, and purpose fix in what the blade would feel:
The iron laws from Nature's hand, the ruthless will of the desert land,
The freedom no one can command – and cast that thought in steel.

And when the blacksmith's work was done, the new sword gleamed like the setting sun.
All down the blade did the old runes run, a warning plain to see.
The steel was grained like the finest wood. A full yard long and more it stood.
The runes read: "I serve but the good of life and liberty."



Near the hilt, set in copper wire, a phoenix rose up from the pyre.
A copper star within the fire rayed out copper cords.
The grip was like a saguaro made that clasped a moon in quartz and jade.
In truth, like to no other blade was the Arizona Sword.

“Blacksmith, well have ye served my cause. This shall aid me to make the laws.
Hmmm, the guards are shaped like cougar’s paws; in truth, like none I’ve seen.
The price is steep, but I shall not carp. She’ll sing more praise than a minstrel’s harp.
Ye gods, that blade is razor-sharp! ...For a symbol, very keen.”

“And cheap she’ll be if I strike ye dead!” The blacksmith promptly turned and fled.
The lordling laughed and shrugged instead, and went out to meet his horde.
He cried out: “This is the day foretold. Just one hand now this land shall hold,
For in this sign will I rule. Behold, the Arizona Sword.”

“No more argument shall we find, but all hereafter shall be inclined
To just one purpose and just one mind. Thus do I mean to do.
Now go ye forth, and take the land.” The sword heard well his first command.
She lunged and twisted in his hand, and fell, and ran him through.

They say the sword vanished clean away, for none has heard of it since that day,
But seek it wisely, and find ye may. Take care, who would be lord.
Beware, ye tyrant! Beware, ye fool! For who is the master and who the tool?
Ye may well serve, but ye shall not rule the Arizona Sword.

*Margaret Davis: backing vocals; Kristoph Klover: backing vocals, chanting, electric bass, electric guitar & percussion;
Beth Milne: French horn; Kevin White: backing vocals. Blacksmith hammer recorded live by Kristoph Klover at
Ardenwood Farm.*

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POLARIS/RECALL

Another song about reincarnation and recalling past lives, this one begins with an unfairly neglected Lovecraft poem and expands from there. The original story was forgettable, but the poem in it struck me as a real gem.

Slumber, watcher, 'til the spheres six-and-twenty thousand years
Have revolved, and I return to the place where now I burn.

The veil wears thin. The years come crowding in.
The veil wears thin. The years come crowding in.

Younger stars in time shall rise to the axis of the skies,
Stars that soothe, stars that bless mankind with forgetfulness.
Only when my round is o'er shall the past disturb thy door.

The veil wears thin. The years come crowding in.
The veil wears thin. The years come crowding in.
Who were you the last time you lived?
Who were you the last time you lived?
Who were you the last time that you lived?
Who were you the last time you lived?

Those visions caught in dream can be truer than they seem,
And when the warnings scream, best believe them.
There are memories you keep beyond the wall of sleep
And you must go diving deep to retrieve them.

Who were you the last time you lived?
Who were you the last time you lived?
Who were you the last time that you lived?
Who were you the last time you lived?

So close your waking eyes, and picture endless skies.
What chants you memorize, now begin them.
Whatever may come by, judge with a thoughtful eye.
Even fantasy and lie have truth within them.

The veil wears thin. The years come crowding in.
The veil wears thin. The years come crowding in.

Slumber, watcher, 'til the spheres six-and-twenty thousand years
Have revolved, and I return to the place where now I burn.
Only when my round is o'er shall the past disturb thy door.

Who were you the last time you lived?
Who were you the last time you lived?
Who were you the last time you lived?
Who were you the last time that you lived?

Margaret Davis: backing vocals; **Kristoph Klover:** backing vocals, gong, oboe, octave mandolin,
percussion, whistle & wind chimes; **Kevin White:** backing vocals; **Rob Wilson:** bodhran

Lyrics by H. P. Lovecraft (1918); additional lyrics © 1991 Leslie Fish
Music © 1991 Leslie Fish



SHIP OF STONE

Don Simpson wrote this as an extrapolation on Norman Spinrad's book *Riding the Torch*. What indeed would histories from a planet mean to a people who've been sailing in space for generations? It's also a lovely futuristic hymn to Gaia, and a great favorite at filksings.

Once there was a Ship of Stone that orbited a mighty star,
And from it flew the First Ship's crew whose children we all are.
And no matter how long we've drawn our track, still, over our shoulder, looking back
Through the hydrogen's hiss and the methane's moan,
Past the polymer clouds of the Dead Stars' shrouds,
All our roads run back to the Ship of Stone.

There the First Crew all were made, and wakened from unknowing sleep
By the boundless sight of Heaven's height and the fires on the Deep.
And no matter how strange the forms we wear, how warped and wild, how rich and rare,
How changed we've made the seed we've sown,
We are blood of those who, singing, rose
From the body of the Ship of Stone.

And there our own ships' frames were formed to grow blue-glowing wings,
And spread them wide to the farthest tide where the last lone beacon sings.
And no matter how tight the net they knot of our web where the Wheel of Light is caught,
How strange and lost, how grand they've grown,
They, too, desire all Heaven's fire,
Our companions since the Ship of Stone.

Once there was a Ship of Stone, clear-domed, broad-hulled and clean,
Where the air shone blue, through whose holds birds flew,
Whose decks were growing green.
And no matter how odd these things may seem, as madly mazed as shards of dream,
They are not a dream that you dream alone.
All ships, all men, are of one kin.
We shall not forget the Ship of Stone.

Margaret Davis: backing vocals; **Kristoph Klover:** backing vocals, oboe & percussion; **Beth Milne:** French horn;
Kevin White: backing vocals

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INVOCATION OF Cthulhu

This is purely for fun, a spoof on Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos, good for bewildering anyone not a science fiction fan. I would not advise using it seriously!

Oh Thou Who Art

The creepiest, crawliest, chaotic creature that ever crept from a crypt;

Oh Thou Who Art

The terrifying, tenacious, turbulent, tumescent and tactless tumbler of temples;

Oh Thou Who Art

The horrifying, hideous, heart-freezing head-honcho of hangover hallucinations;

Oh Thou Who Art

The unspeakable, unequalled, ultimate utterer of unpronounceability;

Oh Thou Who Art

The long-waiting, legendary, lethally lubricious liquescent lawgiver of laxative liturgy;

Oh Thou Who Art

Unforgotten, unforgiving, most unsightly unmentionable usher of uttermost unholiness ever unleashed on the universe –

Great Cthulhu –

You are hereby invited to attend a small informal gathering at these space-time coordinates. RSVP, BYO.

Kristoph Klover: organ & sound effects

© 1991 Leslie Fish

Lead Vocals & 12-String Guitar: Leslie Fish

Producer and Sound Engineer: Kristoph Klover at Flowingglass Music

Executive Producer: Eli Goldberg

Project Manager: Margaret Davis

Illustration: Bradley W. Schenk (www.webomator.com)

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This album is dedicated to the memory of
Philip Emmons Isaac Bonewits: Sorcerer, Scholar, Poet

